

REMARKS

Claims 12-32 are currently being prosecuted. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the Restriction Requirement in view of the remarks as set forth hereinbelow.

Patent Cooperation Treaty

At the outset, it is respectfully submitted that the present application entered into the national phase before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office based on a PCT application. Thus, the rules that apply to the present application with regard to unity of invention are set forth in 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.475 to 1.477.

As set forth in 37 C.F.R. § 1.475(a), an international and a national stage application shall relate to one invention only or to a group of inventions so linked as to form a single general inventive concept. On June 7, 1999, when the present application was filed in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, the Examiner was provided with a copy of the International Preliminary Examination Report. In this report, the International Bureau maintained all of the claims in a single application based on a fact that the claims were so linked as to form a single general inventive concept.

It is respectfully submitted that the present application does include claims that are so linked as to form a single general inventive concept. Thus, claims 12-

32 should be considered in a single application. The Examiner is therefore respectfully requested to reconsider the Restriction Requirement.

Referring to the Examiner's Office Action, the Examiner indicates at paragraph 5 that the special technical feature of Group I is a mat comprising an edge margin having a lower "substance" than the remainder of the mat. Applicants completely agree with the Examiner's assertion. However, Applicants also submit that all of claims 12-32 include this special technical feature and therefore unity of invention is not lacking in the present case.

The Examiner is directed to MPEP 1850 which sets out the requirement for unity of invention and describes some combination of different categories of claims which have unity of invention. Specifically, referring to page 1800-46 of the February 2000 version of the MPEP, unity of invention exists when there is a technical relationship among the claimed inventions involving one or more special technical features. The term "special technical features" is defined as meaning those technical features that define a contribution which each of the inventions considered as a whole, makes over the prior art. Since all of claims 12-32 include this special technical feature of an edge margin having a lower "substance" than the remainder of the mat, Applicants respectfully submit that all of claims 12-32 should be examined in a single application.

The Examiner has set forth Restriction Requirement with regard to 12-32. The grouping of the claims is set forth as follows:

Group I	claims 12-13;
Group II	claims 14-21;
Group III	claims 22-29; and
Group IV	claims 30-32.

Applicants have elected claims 12-13 for initial examination. It is also respectfully submitted that the Restriction Requirement is improper in view of the fact that no serious burden is presented to the Examiner to consider all of the claims in a single application.

As set forth in § 803 of the MPEP, the Examiner must examine an application on the merits if the examination of the entire application can be made without serious burden. Two criteria are identified for proper requirement for restriction:

1. The inventions must be independent or distinct as claimed; and
2. There must be a serious burden on the Examiner if the restriction is not required.

Applicants respectfully submit that a serious burden has not been placed on the Examiner to consider all of the claims in a single application. A review of the subject matter set forth in the claims would have an overlapping search. Thus a

different field of search really does not exist with regard to the claims of the present application.

In order to be responsive to the Examiner's Restriction Requirement, claims 12-13 have been initially elected. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the Restriction Requirement and act on all of the claims of the application. If the Examiner does persist on the Restriction Requirement, Applicants reserve the right to file a Divisional application directed to the non-elected claims at a later date if they so desire.

Information Disclosure Statement

In the Examiner's Office Action, the Examiner indicates that the Information Disclosure Statements filed June 7, 1999 and March 1, 2000 are missing from the case; however, the Examiner would consider the Information Disclosure Statements if a copy of the Information Disclosure Statements were submitted to the Examiner for consideration.

As the Examiner would note, a copy of the Information Disclosure Statements dated June 7, 1999 and March 31, 2000 are attached hereto for the Examiner's consideration.

Priority Document

In the Examiner's Office Action, the Examiner indicates that the ribbon copy of the foreign patent is missing from the case. Since the present application is a national phase of International Application No. PCT/GB98/00203 filed January 23, 1998, a copy of the ribbon foreign patent should have been forwarded by the International Bureau. As indicated on the Notification of Acceptance of application under 35 U.S.C. § 371 dated July 21, 1999, the priority document was received from the International Bureau.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to acknowledge the receipt of the certified copies of the priority documents in the next Office Action.

Favorable action on the present application is earnestly solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Mr. Paul C. Lewis (Reg. No. 43,368) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.


Applicants respectfully petition under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) and § 1.17 for two-month extension of time in which to respond to the Examiner's Office Action. The Extension of Time Fee in the amount of **\$390.00** is attached hereto.

Docket No. 0014-0196P
Appl. No. 09/319,438

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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